

## Summary and Conclusion

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Drawing on the articles and oral presentations from the workshop, we can summarize issues related to the successes, problems, and questions for the future of community-based coastal resources management and co-management in the Visayas.

### Research, Education, and Training

Research is an essential background to any project intervention. It provides the baseline data on which needs can be assessed and progress gauged. Although preliminary and concomitant research is normally carried out by a university or NGO staff, community residents should be drawn into the process at the earliest stages (Edo-Sullano/Cruda; Calumpong). Based on their past experiences, in some cases as virtual “guinea pigs”, many communities are understandably wary of researchers (Luchavez). Involving the community at the beginning, and, if possible, training them to participate in the research and data gathering itself can be extremely useful in many ways (Ablong/Waltemath; Lopez-Rodriguez). It can build a relationship of trust between the project team and the community in which it becomes clear that both groups are in a position to help each other, and that the partnership therefore can have mutual benefits. It is a good opportunity to educate the community about their natural resources, about the functioning of ecosystems, and about various technologies. By helping to test the technologies, communities can see for themselves which ones are most suitable to their particular needs and environment. For example, one research activity in Bohol had the residents experimenting with different methods of preventing barnacle growth on mangroves (Guyo). In this exercise, they not only became acquainted with different methods, but were able to choose which one was best for them.

Some questions remain as to the best way to integrate different disciplines in research that are often going on simultaneously: how to blend the process and results of social versus biological research to mutually benefit and complement each other. Similarly, does research happen for its own sake, or is it a fundamental component of an overall program of project formulation and community strengthening? Several workshop participants pointed out that research should always be documented, and published whenever possible, so that lessons can be transferred to other people and places for broader benefit.

Training is absolutely indispensable in building and sustaining the momentum of community-based resource management (Calumpong). In order to undo the effects of generations of environmentally destructive practices, alter age-old habits, or provide sufficiently clear and viable alternatives to traditional ways of exploiting resources, community members must learn about technologies and techniques, and about the importance of managing their resources sustainably. Training as much as possible should be hands-on, so that people can begin immediately to see practical applications of what they learn. One training method that has proven especially effective is the opportunity for community members from one area to visit another community where certain steps have

already been taken, such as the establishment of a marine sanctuary. This way, the visitors can see for themselves how the intervention came about, how it works, and what are some of the results. Many of the case studies highlighted the value of such visits in raising the enthusiasm and commitment level of community residents to replicate similar initiatives in their home areas (Luchavez; Baritua/Cusi; Segura-Ybañez).

To reduce a community's reliance on outside experts in marine biology and related technologies, community education and training efforts must raise the knowledge level of local leaders and educators on technical matters. Building cooperative research partnerships with NGOs and universities can be an important step toward technical self-reliance (Ablong/Waltemath; Agbayani/Homicillada).

Many of the case studies point out that the sustainability of a community's commitment to resource management hinges directly on the quality of its leadership, whether at the level of the people's organization, barangay council, or municipal or provincial officers (Segura-Ybañez; Baritua/Cusi). Therefore, any training and education efforts must strive to build and spread around leadership skills so that an organization or a community's CBCRM initiatives do not rely on a single dynamic individual.

Any data gathering, educational initiatives or information dissemination campaigns should rest on the notion that community members themselves not only are the most directly dependent upon, and therefore the most natural caretakers of, their physical environment, they are also the most familiar with the terrain, with seasonal variations, and with other problems and potentials of their immediate vicinity. Furthermore, they know their own needs, constraints, operating styles and priorities (Calumpong; Segura-Ybañez). It bears repeating until it becomes firmly ingrained that local residents should be consulted and made active participants early on, and at every step along the way in project planning, implementation, and follow through.

### **Partnership between Local and External Actors and Agencies**

Partnership between an external agency—a donor or other NGO—and a local community-based organization such as a fishers' association, is a crucial starting point for effective project implementation. But this partnership must exhibit certain characteristics. It must grow out of a mutual sense of commitment (i.e., it should not be a hand-out situation, but a relationship in which each party contributes something that the other needs: whether financing, technical expertise, labor, or knowledge of indigenous practices or terrain, etc.), and there must be thorough and open communication all along the way (Segura-Ybañez). Each partner must be clear about each other's goals, purposes, operating style, and—most importantly—limitations. Too easily, especially when organizations with different disciplinary backgrounds attempt to work together, expectations can grow or misunderstandings arise.

There must also be adequate coordination. This is particularly important when several partners are involved, or when more than one project is taking place in a single area (Gutierrez et al). Poor coordination can lead to confusion, unnecessary duplication of efforts, or even working at cross-purposes or in conflict (Yap). Frequently, open and ongoing communication suffice to avert these hazards or mitigate their effects. The example of PROCESS and SEAFDEC in Malalison illustrate how early tensions can be

eased through a concerted effort to communicate and coordinate more effectively (Agbayani/Homicillada). At the outset, partners should agree on a set of operating principles and clearly outline their goals, assumptions and constraints. Another aspect of partnership (or co-management) is the need to see it as having several equally important dimensions: mutual trust and shared responsibility between external and local parties, between governmental and non-governmental institutions, even between men and women within a community. As expressed in the Banica River project case study, true partnership does not come about by signing a contract, but is earned, and grows through a process of seeking mutual understanding and building trust (Bissdorf).

Then there is the problem of scale and scope. While current wisdom indicates that taking a holistic approach to resource management is the way to go, there are some complications and weaknesses inherent in this. For instance, even if the primary concern is coastal resource management, many of the problems aggravating coastal and marine ecosystem degradation originate in the upland areas: deforestation, pollution, rapid population growth to name a few (Magpayo; Calumpong). A resource management program should address those issues and seek to alleviate them. However, this approach significantly broadens the scope of a project, and draws in communities with disparate interests, knowledge, income bases, and orientations. It makes any interventions several degrees more complex, by, for example, introducing more coordination concerns. How can the legitimate goal of tackling a whole problem be reconciled with manageability, given divergent local interests as well as limited time, funding, and staff capabilities?

## **Community Organizing**

That community residents have a keen interest in the health of natural resources in their immediate vicinity goes without saying; therefore, their role as primary stakeholders in any resource management initiative cannot be overlooked (Magpayo; Gutierrez et al). In many cases, though, effective results can best be assured by mobilizing them through awareness raising and a set of focused conservation activities. Community organizing must begin early in the project implementation (Cimagala). It should focus on creating or building the capacity of existing people's organizations that can rally community support for the project and then take on responsibility after the external partner has withdrawn. However, the community organizing work should not focus so specifically on the partner people's organization that it forgets that the benefits should accrue to the community at large. One step in this direction could be, as much as possible, to enlist community residents to conduct the organizing activities. They are already attuned to the community's characteristics, needs, and problems, and are already trusted and accepted by the community. Organizing work should also involve a strong component of education.

Gender came up repeatedly as a point of concern in CBCRM. In the past, women and their contributions to community livelihood and resource management have been overlooked. But they participate actively in the life of the community, even if not in the most prominent decision-making or wage-earning capacities. Therefore, any intervention should examine carefully the role of women in a community, and solicit their participation in all stages of project implementation, from planning to execution to

evaluation of results. Women can be involved in data gathering, in alternative livelihood projects, in creating and managing associations, in disseminating information, and other activities (Gutierrez et al). In other words, when we think of coastal resource management, we should not immediately think only of the fishers themselves, who are most often men, but also the roles women do and might play. Their active involvement in all phases of project design and implementation should not be rhetoric, but a fundamental part in practice (Lopez-Rodriguez; Agbayani/Homicillada).

## **Political and Legal Environment**

The role of local government remains central to CBCRM and co-management. Because the government issues the ordinances and carries the authority for enforcing legal regulations on resource management, and because government offices are often critical suppliers of funding or technical expertise, community-based coastal resource management must involve the local government units (Gutierrez et al; Calumpong; Agbayani/Homicillada).

This can be difficult for several reasons: one, most political offices are temporary. The periodic turnover in personnel can mean that while one official supported a project or activity or objective, his or her successor might not, thus undoing the efforts of the previous administration. An example from the CVRP experience bears this out: one administration helped install artificial reefs of concrete, but when the next came into office, the cement went instead toward the building of basketball courts (Cited during open workshop discussion). Similarly, politicians may neglect some communities, either because they are too remote to bother with, or do not carry the same political clout as another area (Cimagala). Two, some politicians have corrupt tendencies or special relationships with moneyed interests, and therefore may hinder effective law enforcement either by failing to prosecute violators or by issuing permits to exempt certain parties from compliance. This can frustrate a community's efforts to monitor and protect its resources, and residents may lose interest in doing their own part (Yap). Three, politicians may be suspicious of outside agencies coming in to the area, and may fear that the external NGO seeks to undermine their authority. Often, they want to see concrete results before coming on board in support of a project's initiatives. To put this skepticism to rest, thorough baseline data can be helpful in showing project progress. However, because securing the cooperation and support of local government units is essential to achieving a sustainable system of CBCRM, ways must be found to cope with these obstacles.

In terms of the legal environment, tenurial access to natural resources remains a sticking point in many areas. The manifold issues of access, use and extraction rights as well as enforcement responsibilities must be ironed out (Segura-Ybañez). In the Philippines, the Local Government Code of recent years devolved a number of important functions and duties to lower levels of government: a step in the right direction, but many communities are not yet fully aware of the code or its practical implications. Further, in many places, there remain unclear legal guidelines, too many opportunities for loopholes or lax enforcement. In Negros Oriental, for example, we saw how the certificate of stewardship program tried to help inspire local residents to rehabilitate mangrove areas,

but there was no follow up, so residents continued to do as they pleased, which was to give other land uses higher priority (Calumpong). There must be a clear and fair legal backdrop for CBCRM that acknowledges the right and responsibility of communities to be the primary caretakers of their environment, but the legal framework must be bound tightly to a reliable and effective enforcement and follow-through mechanism (Baritua/Cusi).

## **Costs and Benefits**

One strong theme came forward again and again: that of limited funding. Most NGOs or donors who conceive a project and introduce it to a community also bring with them the funding necessary for its implementation. Consequently, community residents may begin to see new projects as sources of income, or as an opportunity to improve the community's livelihood in the short term (Magpayo). In many of the case studies, we saw how a community appeared to be genuinely enthusiastic about a project, participated actively in the training exercises, rallied into groups and associations, and carried out a number of project-related activities, only to let these activities fade out or drop off abruptly once the external agent departed or funding came to an end (Ablong/Waltemath). This frequently occurring phenomenon raises the question whether, in spite of best intentions and efforts, many communities have not in fact internalized the lessons of sustainable resource management, but only go along with a program as long as there is someone to guide them through it, preferably with money.

Many case studies claim that sustainability of a project's initiatives depends on continued educational activities and constant training, especially in terms of the long-term benefits of natural resource management vis-à-vis short-term economic gain. But who will manage and pay for this program of perpetual education? Finally, most NGOs believe that their ultimate objective is to become unnecessary, to hand over to the community everything it needs to persist in its drive for sustainable resource management (Gutierrez et al). Regrettably, the reality appears again and again to fall short of this ideal. Unless someone from outside takes responsibility for ongoing activities, and pays for them, community motivation falters. What does this state of affairs mean for the sustainability of even the most well conceived CBCRM initiatives?

Clearly, an underlying theme through many of the issues discussed above is the question of benefits. It is both unrealistic and unfair to expect that anyone, most especially the poor, adopt a purely altruistic view of resource management. Training and awareness raising activities can create a greater appreciation for the intrinsic value of various species as well as the integrity of entire ecosystems, and thereby enhance the commitment of people to conserve and protect their surroundings (Luchavez). Nevertheless, while many religious or philosophical belief systems may hold that the natural world has an innate right to protection from overexploitation or extinction, the human race shares one even more compelling inner drive in common: the need to survive and provide for one's family. Given that this need lies at the foundation for most of the decisions we make throughout our lives, any intervention to establish a community-based resource management scheme must take it into account and acknowledge the right of

local people to benefit from the resource and from externally or internally initiated efforts to conserve it.

If a project cannot actually raise the community's standard of living, it must make every effort to prevent the people from becoming *worse* off, such as eliminating one method of livelihood without providing for viable alternatives (Agbayani/ Homicillada; Gutierrez et al). In this regard, a focus on territorial use rights or some other type of tenurial system for coastal and nearshore areas may be in order (Magpayo). When an area is identified and clearly demarcated in which people know they have a legally protected right to extract resources for their livelihood, they will be more likely to perceive benefits in actively guarding and managing the area. But these areas must be established everywhere, or else people will violate the "rules" of sustainable resource management in other areas even as they adhere to them within their own immediate vicinities.

Finally, the provision of alternative livelihoods has long been a feature of community-based resource management projects. It seems useful, however, to underscore the importance of allowing the community to choose from a range of possible options. For instance, while eco-tourism may be a promising source of income and employment in one area, in another it may be perceived as inviting too many people to a sensitive area or introducing unwelcome cultural influences (Agbayani/Homicillada). Other factors must be considered as well. For example, some fisherfolk work during part of the year on farms, and vice versa; therefore, project interventions in either coastal or agricultural resource management should take into account these multiple interests (Edo-Sullano/Cruda).

The following questions were raised during workshop discussions, and perhaps merit more investigation:

1. How to effectively manage artificial reefs. Should they be used as fish aggregators to revive the ecosystem or to enrich a fishing ground (thus opening the area to overfishing, bringing us back to the old problem)? Do tires make good artificial reefs?
2. Is a protected area better off when there is a local community to take over its management, or when the area is kept free from human habitation (i.e., people are either moved elsewhere or prevented from residing there), possibly subjecting the area to the dangers of "open access"?
3. How can deputized fish wardens be empowered to enforce existing legislation in the face of intimidating large-scale violators or an unsupportive local government structure?
4. How can the maintenance of resource management interventions be assured after the withdrawal of external funding or agents?
5. As a practical matter, how can the immediate needs of resource rehabilitation be balanced against the virtue of taking steps to prevent resource degradation in the first place?
6. How can the demonstrated benefits of working on focused issues with small groups be balanced against the need to take a broad, interdisciplinary view of resource management that takes into account the interrelationships of neighboring ecosystems, e.g., upland forested areas, farmland, nearshore reefs?